

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-19 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, 1, 3 and 7 are amended, and claim 2 is canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein. Support for the amendment to claim 3 can be found in claims 1-3 as originally filed. Support for the amendments to claims 1 and 7 can be found in the specification as originally filed, for example, at page 46, lines 6-12, and in claims 1, 2 and 7 as originally filed. Thus, no new matter is added by these amendments.

Also by this Amendment, new claims 10-19 are added. Support for new claims 10-19 can be found in the specification as originally filed, for example, at page 8, lines 14-15; page 16, lines 7-9; page 17, lines 6-8; page 21, lines 15-19; page 24, lines 3-11; page 36, lines 11-20, and in claims 1-9 as originally filed. Thus, no new matter is added by new claims 10-19.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

The Office Action objects to claims 2 and 3 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication that claims 2 and 3 contain allowable subject matter.

II. Priority

As indicated in the Application Transmittal filed with this application, certified copies of the priority documents were filed in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in the parent application. While the detailed comments in the Office Action acknowledge receipt of the certified copies (see Office Action at page 2), the Office Action Summary page indicates that none of the certified copies have been received. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner acknowledge in the next Office Action that the certified copies were received.

III. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 4, 6 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Japanese Patent 07-084490 to Hinokigaya et al. The Office Action also rejects claims 1 and 4-9 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Japanese Patent 07-199754 to Magai et al. While Applicants do not necessarily agree with these rejections, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 1 and 7 have been amended to clearly overcome these rejections.

In particular, claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of non-rejected claim 2; that is, claim 1 now sets forth, in pertinent part, "an image stripping apparatus comprising: ... an applying means for applying a releasing material on a surface of the image stripping member." Applicants respectfully submit that, as admitted by the Office Action's indication that claim 2 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, neither Hinokigaya nor Magai disclose an applying means for applying a releasing material on a surface of the image stripping member. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1, and its dependent claims 3-6, are patentable over Hinokigaya and Magai.

In addition, the method of claim 7 has been amended to further recite a step of "applying a releasing material on a surface of the image stripping member." Applicants respectfully submit that for at least the same reasons, neither Hinokigaya nor Magai disclose an applying means for applying a releasing material on a surface of the image stripping member, the cited references also do not disclose a step of applying a releasing material on a surface of the image stripping member. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 7, and its dependent claims 8 and 9, are patentable over Hinokigaya and Magai.

IV. New Claims

New independent claim 10 sets forth, in pertinent part, an "image stripping apparatus comprising: an image stripping member having a surface layer having affinity and releasability with respect to an image recording material; an image stripping means ... ; and a

removing means ... , wherein the surface layer comprises a releasing material and an affinitive material." New claims 11-14 depend from claim 10.

New independent claim 15 sets forth an "image stripping method utilizing an image stripping apparatus, the method comprising the steps of: applying a releasing material on a surface of the image stripping member; stripping an image forming material from an image recording medium by making an image stripping member contact the image forming material on the image recording medium and heating the image recording medium, the image stripping member having a surface layer having affinity and releasability with respect to an image recording material; and removing, from the image stripping member, the image forming material which has been transferred to the image stripping member from the image recording medium, wherein the surface layer comprises a releasing material and an affinitive material." New claims 16-19 depend from claim 15.

Applicants respectfully submit that neither of the cited references disclose or suggest an image stripping member having a surface layer comprising both a releasing material and an affinitive material, as set forth in claims 10 and 15.

Further, as discussed above with respect to claim 7 neither Hinokigaya nor Magai disclose a step of "applying a releasing material on a surface of the image stripping member," as set forth in claim 15.

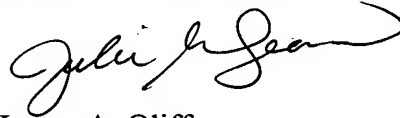
Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that new independent claims 10 and 15, and their respective dependent claims 11-14 and 16-19, are patentable over the cited references.

V. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1 and 3-19 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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